

## National Priority 5: Strengthen Communications Capabilities

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This section is intended to address issues such as:

### **Associated Capability: Communications Capability**

- Address current capabilities for interoperable communications, the target capabilities identified in the SCIP, and the migration plan to achieve those target capabilities. Indicate the desired end-point in each of the SAFECOM Continuum lanes and its percent of achievement toward those end-points. Specify the intended use of PSIC, HSGP, and ICTAP assistance.

### **Associated Capability: Emergency Public Information and Warning**

*Reference the Target Capabilities List when describing your current level of capability. Specifically, consider the following information for the capability: Capability Description, Outcomes, Critical Tasks, and Performance Measures and Objectives.*

## **National Priority 5: Strengthen Communications Capabilities**

### **A. Accomplishments**

#### **Interoperability Coordination Office**

The Commonwealth has established an Interoperability Coordination Office responsible for statewide planning, coordination, and implementation of interoperable communications consistent with the guidelines established by the Federal government. For more information on this office, please see the Overview.

#### **Local Capability Assessment for Readiness**

Virginia adopted Local Capability Assessment for Readiness (LCAR) as an interactive self-assessment tool, and workshops were conducted in FY 2003 to introduce localities to the program.

The Code of Virginia states, “all political subdivisions shall provide an annually updated emergency management assessment to the State Coordinator of Emergency Management on or before July 1 of each year.” Using the LCAR instrument as developed by FEMA and its professional partners, 98% of localities have complied with this requirement. Future assessments may be performed using other nationally recognized standards for both State and local assessments

#### **Statewide Baseline Survey**

In 2007, the Office of Commonwealth Preparedness coordinated the Commonwealth Communications Baseline Survey to collect information regarding the current status of local, regional and statewide interoperable communications. This survey collected information over a 3-month period from across the Commonwealth to determine equipment age, frequency of use, and a variety of other critical information to identify gaps and opportunities to leverage existing investments.

#### **Strategic Plan for Statewide Communications Interoperability**

The Strategic Plan for Statewide Communications Interoperability was developed by the CICO, the SIEC and the Advisory Group in response to § 9.1-1100 of the Code of Virginia. The Plan seeks to enhance data and voice communications interoperability between local, regional, State and Federal agencies. The ultimate goal is for agencies and their representatives at the local, regional, State, and Federal levels to communicate using compatible systems, in real time, across disciplines and jurisdictions.

All agencies and localities must comply with and achieve consistency with the Statewide Interoperability Strategic Plan by July 1, 2015 in order to remain eligible to receive State or Federal funds for communication programs and systems. The Commonwealth will continue to support the annual update and implementation of the Strategic Plan for Statewide Communications Interoperability to ensure that the Plan remains viable and current.

## **Statewide Agencies Radio System**

The Statewide Agencies Radio System (STARS) Program will facilitate the communications of 21 participating state agencies by upgrading the existing Virginia State Police land mobile and microwave radio networks. STARS will create an integrated, seamless, statewide, wireless voice and data communications system designed to meet the needs of these agencies. The system will be shared by agencies engaged in public safety, protection, and service; and will facilitate interoperability with and between localities at the county and city level. STARS includes Federal users and allows interoperability with their facilities within the Commonwealth. To accomplish this, the program will: increase capacity, upgrade the technology, and enhance coverage of the land mobile radio network; upgrade the technology of, and create disaster recovery alternate paths for the microwave radio network; and implement statewide law enforcement mobile data.

Connecting state agencies that respond to both routine public service requirements, and to emergencies, often requires coordination of multiple agencies. By facilitating interoperability with and between localities at the county and city level, STARS will enable agency responders – wherever they are located, on whatever radio platform – to seamlessly communicate as one, facilitating the move from independent operation to interdependent collaboration and cooperation. The program is currently being built statewide (At this point, STARS has already been implemented in Regions 1 and 5) and will be completed by 2009.

## **Radio Caches**

While STARS will link 21 State agencies onto one statewide digital voice and data system, it will not provide these communications for localities. To ensure Virginia will be able to provide emergency communications in a disaster, three strategic radio caches have been established that can respond statewide during times of need. Three localities won a competitive process to identify where the caches will be located. The City of Chesapeake, Fairfax County, and the City of Harrisonburg will host these radio caches that will consist of between 300-500 portable radios, a portable tower, gateway devices and repeaters to establish communications anywhere in the Commonwealth. These caches will consist of the same type of equipment so training can be standardized and staffing needs can be provided by all three localities.

These caches were awarded \$5 million in 2006 HSGP funding and all three localities are currently moving into the procurement phase which should be complete within the next 5 months. Additionally the Commonwealth continues to support the need for a standard Geographical Information System (GIS) and WebEOC. This is a priority of the State Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) and there are pilot projects being conducted in the City of Richmond.

## **Rapid Deployment Solutions Interoperability Project (RDSIP)**

The newly formed RDSIP is a pilot project with Sprint and the Commonwealth to provide an on-site mobile communications unit to facilitate emergency communications and augment response efforts with additional use of radios and a portable tower. The RDSIP will provide 100 radios to each of the three strategic radio caches which will allow communications using the Sprint network statewide.

## **Conferences**

The Fourth Annual Virginia Interoperable Communications Conference was held in 2007 and drew a record 300 local, State and Federal stakeholders to discuss networking and interoperability issues. Each year, this conference helps overcome cultural barriers to interoperability, and to-date Virginia remains the only State with a statewide conference dedicated to this subject.

Local jurisdictions are being encouraged to work with local business organizations to hold joint public/private conferences on preparedness and security-- the Commonwealth will host a conference in May 2008 and many localities have already taken this step as well.

## **Virginia is a DHS Best Practices Model for Interoperability**

Virginia has been consistently recognized by DHS as a Best Practices Model for interoperable communication planning and implementation. Beginning with the Statewide Communications Interoperability Planning (SCIP) Methodology that documented Virginia's initial approach for planning, DHS SAFECOM program has been a strong supporter of the interoperability effort. In fact, SAFECOM's requirements for statewide interoperable communications planning recommends the use of Virginia's SCIP Methodology and Virginia's Strategic Plan as Best Practices guide for completion of statewide plans in all U.S. states and territories.

## **Other accomplishments made by the end of FY 2007:**

- Established and implemented 3 statewide plans using practitioner governance structure
- CICO and PMO established to coordinate and implement the interoperability effort statewide
- SIEC coordinates grants to ensure alignment and compliance—over \$9.2 million distributed by SIEC in 2007
- COMLNC implemented in Region 1, and central Virginia has 31 locality regional systems out for RFP.
- Radio caches located in the NCR, Hampton Roads, Richmond, and North/Central Virginia.
- Common language protocol established and implemented at VSP and other local agencies.
- National Interoperability channels required in all portable radios and standard nomenclatures identified.
- Partnership formed between VITA and Northrup Grumman to provide a statewide IT infrastructure
- Funding in Prince George County was used to upgrade the county's radio communications.
- Region VII jurisdictions are communicating and operating together across locality boundaries – communications systems are able to interface with one another. Police, fire, hospitals, and dispatch centers are current examples of regional interoperability.
- Emergency Alert systems in place in Region VII include Reverse 911, satellite or XM radio, television, Roam Secure, and cellular text messaging.
- In data interoperability Virginia is currently working on the EMMA project which is GIS mapping software that works into WebEOC. Along with this, the STARS program has a data component.

- The Virginia Department of Emergency Management and other State agencies are currently implementing WebEOC in the Virginia EOC.
- Virginia is working to ensure that the necessary technical support and funding is in place to support, promote and integrate VGIN as an interoperable tool with existing and future technology projects.

#### **EPI and Warning Accomplishments:**

##### **Training and Exercises**

The VDEM PIO staff conducts training courses three times a year focusing on emergency training for Public Information Officers (PIOs), and other local individuals who play a role in communicating with the public during emergencies.

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) has nine public information officers who receive ongoing training and meet regularly with key media outlets. In addition, VDH has developed a comprehensive communications plan as well as multiple public service announcements and emergency orders for a wide range of potential public health emergencies.

In 2007 VERTEX '07 and two VOPEX exercises tested a wide range of capabilities, including emergency public information and warning.

##### **Limited English Proficiency Outreach**

Localities have made efforts to reach populations with limited English proficiency, and VDEM has launched the Listo Virginia campaign. This campaign is a coordinated effort to provide vital preparedness information to Virginia's Latino and Hispanic communities. It will unite State government agencies with private sector and local government partners in a statewide public education effort to prepare Spanish speakers for all hazards, including natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks.

##### **Special Needs Outreach**

Ten Regional Community Based Emergency Response Seminars (entitled "Preparing All Abilities") were recently conducted by VDEM, VDH, Citizen Corps, VDDHH and many others in a collaborative effort to communicate and educate individuals with special needs. In addition, localities have made efforts to reach out to special needs populations by conducting ten Regional Community Based Emergency Response Seminars – Preparing All Abilities – a collaborative effort between VDEM, VDH, Citizen Corps, VDDHH and many others.

##### **Communicating with the Private Sector**

The EOC PIO and VDEM PIO are both partnering with the media to disseminate information to the business community and have created a business preparedness toolkit.

##### **Conferences**

Four times per year, Region Media Council Meetings are held in each of Virginia's four main media markets (NVA, Richmond, Hampton roads, Roanoke). These meetings are attended by State PIOs and help foster the development of relationships between the media and state/local PIOs.

### **Public Alert System**

The Statewide Alerts Network (SWAN) project has just begun operating and is used to primarily to notify the Virginia Emergency Response Team (VERT), VDEM personnel, and the Virginia Department of Transportation. The project uses a software program called “Roam Secure” which is a private, dedicated system for alerts

### **Alert System for Nuclear Plants**

Virginia has two nuclear plants – North Anna and Surry. There is a siren box in the EOC of all EOCs in jurisdictions within a 25 mile radius of the two plants. There is one siren box for each plant, and most of this infrastructure is funded by Dominion Power.

### **Emergency Management Network**

The VEOC uses the Emergency Management Network (EMNet ), which is a secure and encrypted site, to record and release audio messages and to receive automatic weather reports via satellite. There are 2 EMNet Systems currently in place – one is used by the State Police (for Amber Alerts) and the other is used for emergency management items (and is hosted by COMLABS).

Currently, two EMNet computers are located within the hurricane prone and highly populated areas, Regions 1 and 5. VDEM will be adding 22 additional systems to better cover the hurricane prone coastal areas.

### **VDEM Public Affairs Office**

VDEM maintains a website that has links to various emergency preparedness and response sites, historic information pertaining to state disasters, a library of forms and articles, and funding sources available to localities. Prior to and during emergency or disaster situations, “hits” on the site go up dramatically, at times more than doubling the normal number of visits to the website within a small period of time. For mass communication of preparedness plans for citizenry and businesses, the website has proven to be an invaluable tool for information dissemination and resources for the public.

### **The Virginia Public Inquiry Center (VPIC)**

In preparation for and response to events, the Governor may authorize the staffing of the VPIC, a telephone call center, to respond to the questions and concerns of the citizenry and provide general safety and resource information, and to coordinate and manage unaffiliated volunteers and unsolicited donations. The VPIC is located in the DMV call center in downtown Richmond.

### **“Ready Virginia” Campaign**

The “Ready Virginia” Campaign, launched in 2007, is Virginia’s version of DHS’s national community preparedness campaign Ready.Gov. It includes a website along with TV and Radio public service announcements. The campaign is based on Ready.gov campaign, AND brochures and pamphlets have published to educate the public about a wide range of community preparedness issues.

### **Regional accomplishments for Emergency Public Information and Warning**

- In Region VII, modes of public communication are SMS messages, next generation 911 and wireless calls.
- The town of Goshen in Rockbridge County experienced a total loss of water for an entire week. PIOs successfully provided information to community residents regarding health precautions and the availability of clean drinking water.
- The shootings on the Virginia Tech campus in April that left 32 dead, was an emergency event that required the PIOs to establish a Joint Information Center (JIC) for over two weeks in order to provide emergency information to the public and media. These two events, plus a number of training initiatives, helped enhance the State and local emergency public information and warning capability.

## **B. Current Capabilities**

### **Communications Capability:**

- Northern Virginia Region 7 (which contains the National Capitol Region Urban Area Security Initiative region) and Tidewater Region 5 (which contains the Hampton Roads Urban Area Security Initiative region) both possess strong interoperability capabilities. (*Interop Plan '07, p 10*)
- Communication systems support on-demand, real-time interoperable voice and data communication
- Communications standard operating procedures (SOPs) that conform to NIMS are in place and are used in routine multiple jurisdictional responses
- A multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional governance structure to improve communications interoperability planning and coordination has been established
- Formal interoperable communications agreements have been established through the governance structure
- Interoperability communications plans have been developed through governance structure and include all relevant agencies for data and voice communications.
- Redundant and diverse interoperable communication systems are available
- Plans to coordinate the procurement of communications assets to ensure interoperability are in place
- Plans to acquire and influence sustained interoperability and systems maintenance funding have been developed
- Plans include a procedure to return communications back to normal operations after each significant incident
- Communications-specific tabletop exercises are conducted with multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency operations, technical, and dispatch participants
- Communications-specific operational exercises with multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency participants are conducted

### **Emergency Public Information and Warning Capability:**

- The emergency operations plan (EOP) specifies how and when to enact the public information
- Function as well as public alert and warning functions

- The emergency operations plan (EOP) specifies how and when to enact a Joint Information System (JIS)
- Emergency Alert System (EAS) activation plan is in place and is tested regularly
- Public awareness and education plan is in place with all appropriate agencies and partners
- Plans for Joint Information Center (JIC) include multi-jurisdictional, multi-disciplinary agencies, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and staffing JIC functions
- Communications plan in place to communicate changes in threat level (in the Homeland Security Advisory System) to the public
- Public Information Field Guide is in place
- Procedures are in place for communicating with internal and external groups and individuals about disasters and emergencies following established standards, as appropriate (e.g. the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1600)
- Preparedness information is widely distributed in languages appropriate to the cultural and ethnic needs of the populations of the area

### C. Three-Year Targets

#### Communications Capability:

<Overview of future activities—write this after targets have been finalized>

Target Description	Projected Completion Year	Status
Develop infrastructure in place and operating to ensure interoperability of communications and other technologies.	2010	Open
Utilize common language, coordinated protocols and standards statewide.	2015	Open
Integrate existing and future communications systems.	2015	Open
Facilitate training to enhance effective use of communications systems.	2015	Open
Agencies and their representatives at the local, regional, state, and federal levels will be able to communicate using compatible systems, in real time, across disciplines and jurisdictions, to respond more efficiently during day-to-day operations and major even situations.	2015	Open
The programming of national interoperability channels is most prevalent in localities using 800MHz; however, the majority of responses to a statewide survey indicated that most law enforcement agencies (in both rural and urban areas) still use the Statewide Interdepartmental Radio System (SIRS). This system operates on 39.54 MHz and provides one channel for communications statewide. While SIRS provides coverage across Virginia, it has just one channel which is easily overwhelmed when multiple law enforcement agencies are involved. ( <i>Interop Plan '07, p 10</i> )	2010	Open



Insert goal here for having all jurisdictions on 800 MHz frequency?		
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Goals for FY 2008-2015—**are any of these potential goals for 2010?**

- Continued incremental improvement of interoperable communications
- Sustainable funding identified for continued management and coordination
- SIEC coordinates all interoperable communications grants statewide and ensures Plan alignment
- Multiple years of measurement shows improved interoperable communications capabilities
- Disparate local systems and STARS are connected and achieve interoperability
- Radio caches are operational and providing back-up throughout the Commonwealth.
- All portable radios have the same interoperability channels with standardized channel names
- Statewide IT infrastructure fully built-out and operational

(Interop Plan '07, p 9)

#### **Emergency Public Information and Warning Capability:**

Target Description	Projected Completion Year	Status
Identify special needs populations and develop multiple methods for communicating with these groups	2010	Open
Establish formal relationships between the Commonwealth and broadcast media for assistance delivering emergency public information	2010	Open
Prepare citizens to deter, prevent, respond to, and recover from a disaster through participation in education and training programs and access to a timely and accurate public information system.	2010	Open

## **D. Initiatives**

### **Communications Capability:**

***Define minimum levels of operable and interoperable communications capabilities for each region***

- Develop an interoperable communications operations model
- Utilize the Commonwealth Communications Baseline Survey to help localities determine their specific operational needs for voice and data communications
  - Engage RPACs to obtain guidance from regional stakeholders
- Identify operational gaps for each region
  - Address gaps to the extent possible with available resources
  - Focus on operability projects in rural communities

***Match specific voice and data solutions to identified regional operational needs, and address connectivity and sustainability.***

- Develop a technology strategy that describes the system of systems vision and the overall direction of interoperability in the state
- Evaluate existing technology systems by region to better plan for technology installations
- Identify opportunities to leverage the statewide IT infrastructure projects in the technical strategy
- Address connectivity and sustainability for interoperability solutions

***Complete the Strategic Technology Reserve (STR) to enhance back-up communications capability within the Commonwealth of Virginia***

- Provide assistance and coordination to newly awarded caches
  - Develop an MOU for statewide usage in collaboration with the Attorney General's Office
  - Determination of standard technology purchases
  - Devise an exercise and training program for inclusion into pre-existing exercises
- Provide information to localities regarding the availability of newly awarded caches and how to request the resource
- Expand local grant process for Type III-V caches
  - Dependent upon funding
- Finalize statewide-deployable radio cache policies and procedures with VDEM involving cache request from the Virginia Emergency Operations Center (EOC)
- Monitor existing caches and document Lessons Learned
- Support the Rapid Deployment Solutions Interoperability Project (RDSIP) pilot to provide a statewide resource for emergency communications
  - Develop an evaluation plan for deployment of the resource for planned and unplanned events statewide
  - Identify eight deployment opportunities
  - Monitor exercises and document Lessons Learned
  - Coordinate with VDEM and the SIEC to capture lessons learned and recommendations on continued support for the RDSIP

***Promote the establishment of regional systems of systems and interface with STARS to localities and regions to expand communications among disparate systems***

- Compile and distribute lessons learned from existing COMLINC installations
- Identify more cost effective solutions for patching capabilities for disparate radio systems
- Review capabilities and limitations of all possible patching solutions
- Explore costs and sustainability for connectivity options

***Support expansion of national interoperability channels in all bands to allow responders to use their home system's radio regardless of location within the Commonwealth of Virginia***

- Encourage the use of standard nomenclature for national interoperability channels in all user radios in alignment with National Public Safety Telecommunications Council (NPSTC) guidance
- Encourage programming of National Interoperability Channels in all radios

***Support the expansion, deployment and integration of WebEOC and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) statewide to coordinate incident management data interoperability***

- Monitor current projects for WebEOC/GIS and develop lessons learned
- Coordinate with VDEM and VITA to establish new instances of WebEOC/GIS within the state and across state borders and coordinate interfacing among existing instances of the software

***Ensure portable and mobile radio purchases and replacements are P-25 and narrowband compliant.***

- Require the national interoperability frequencies to be programmed into portable and mobile radios when purchased with grant funds
- Conduct outreach to communicate the importance of P-25 standards and the narrowband requirements from the Federal Communications Committee

Geographic Scope:

This initiative will be statewide but may require a phased approach to implementation, focusing on the areas of greatest impact and risk first and expanding over the next five years to additional areas.

Program Management:

This initiative aligns with the Commonwealth of Virginia Strategic Plan for Statewide Communications Interoperability which is the guiding document for the Commonwealth's interoperability efforts. The Commonwealth understands that achieving communications interoperability will not be immediate fix and as a result has a 2015 deadline for statewide, multi-jurisdictional communications interoperability.

To ensure the success of the initiative, the Commonwealth will need to develop grant guidance, assist regions in obtaining grant dollars, provide training and outreach for potential interoperability solutions, install new infrastructure, and establish a tracking process for possible solutions. Grant guidance, grant assistance, and training will be overseen and provided by the governance structure. Additional funding will be needed to install new infrastructure. Existing infrastructure will be leveraged to avoid system redundancy and keep costs low.

***Enhance communications operability in rural areas.***

Description:

The Commonwealth of Virginia consists of densely populated urban cities as well as hundreds of rural communities. As high-risk urban regions continue to advance interoperability capabilities, the rural areas of Virginia continue to fall further behind in both operability and interoperability. The sheer cost of communications equipment has eliminated operability possibilities for many rural areas. Overcoming this gap was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in a prioritization exercise for improving voice communications.

Implementation of this initiative will provide a communications capability that does not currently exist and will set the stage for eventual regional interoperability. Additionally, it will lessen

communication inefficiencies while creating a safer and more effective environment for public safety practitioners in rural regions. This initiative will be accomplished by:

- Building on the State baseline to identify rural areas with greatest need;
- Conducting awareness training opportunities to discuss communications options; and
- Securing funds to purchase new or leverage existing equipment and infrastructure.

#### Geographic Scope:

This initiative will primarily focus on the following four of the Commonwealth's seven homeland security regions:

- Region 2 (Culpeper)
- Region 3 (Central Virginia)
- Region 4 (Southwest Virginia)
- Region 6 (Roanoke)

#### Program Management:

This initiative aligns with the Commonwealth of Virginia Strategic Plan for Statewide Communications Interoperability which is the guiding document for the Commonwealth's interoperability efforts. The Commonwealth relies on its practitioner-driven interoperability governance structure to coordinate, oversee, and make decisions for all interoperability efforts. Existing resources include the members of this governance structure which represent public safety practitioners from across the State. These resources, in conjunction with the existing process for the approval and dissemination of funds and the interoperability baseline, will determine which localities will be addressed through a phased process of initiative implementation.

Additional resources outside the current scope and funding ability of the governance structure will be needed to fully accomplish this initiative. The tools, resources and processes needed to enhance operability in Virginia's rural regions include the collection of unbiased and non-vendor specific information, trainers and training materials to provide working sessions on communication options, engineering assistance, RFP development assistance, and funding for system implementations.

#### **Emergency Public Information and Warning Capability:**

***Improve Virginia's emergency public information capabilities at the State and local levels.***

#### Description:

This initiative addresses several needs identified during the analysis by focusing on the following actions:

#### **Planning, Training and Exercises**

- The PIO Course, sponsored by VDEM, will be expanded to four times per year in 2008.
- Training exercises – VERTEX, VOPEX, and regional exercises – that involve emergency public information and warning play and provide opportunity for local citizen groups' participation, will continue and expand in size.

- Comprehensive Hurricane Evacuation and Sheltering Communications Plan – in the development stages in 2007 will be issued in first draft in 2008 and will be further developed and tested in 2008 – 2010. OCP has the lead, and VDEM, VDOT, VSP, DSS, and VDH PIOs are involved as well.
- Currently there is no comprehensive list of all PIOs in the Commonwealth. This needs to be developed and updated regularly.

### **JIC Operations**

- The State will staff the Joint Information Center (JIC) with Public Information Officers (PIOs) from ‘nontraditional’ agencies, who are trained by VDEM on the State’s emergency operations plan, as well as people from the Virginia Emergency Operations Center (VEOC). Currently the JIC uses a variety of VERT and Non-VERT PIOs--for example at the Virginia Tech tragedy a Mines, Minerals, and Energy PIO was used because of his proximity to the situation.
- Local governments and the State are working to ensure that during an emergency, the JIC is activated quickly and according to established SOPs, thereby allowing government to speak with “one voice” in a timely, accurate, consistent, and coordinated manner. This function is practiced annually in the VERTEX exercise.
- There are currently two coordination tools available. The Virtual JIC being used in the National Capital Region and WebEOC. One of the platforms could be used by PIOs to coordinate on a local, regional or statewide basis during emergencies.

### **Outreach**

- Virginia is working to develop an outreach campaign to educate citizens on plans developed and how they can prepare themselves to be self-sustaining for 72 hours following a disaster.
- The Ready Virginia Campaign will continue and expand its reach.
- The state-wide advertising campaign will be further developed and launched in the 2008-2010 period.
- The State will continue to build partnerships with the media, localities and private industry to best coordinate the distribution of preparedness information as well as to inform and coordinate emergency response efforts (including efforts to reach special needs, limited English proficient, and transient populations).

### Geographic Scope:

This issue affects all regions in the state, but especially rural areas that do not have full-time PIOs.

### Program Management:

This initiative helps improve expanded regional collaboration by improving emergency public information capabilities through plan development and training for public information personnel. Many localities have PIOs, but not all of these individuals understand the specific needs of the public during an emergency. Several regional PIO organizations currently exist, and these groups can be used to increase coordination on a local, regional and statewide level. There is also an

association of government PIOs that include local and state level PIOs. Individuals from these groups will be selected to manage this effort.

***Identify special needs populations in Virginia and develop/improve means to communicate with these individuals.***

Description:

This initiative addresses the emergency public information need identified unanimously by the stakeholder group as the number one emergency public information priority. To accomplish this initiative, Virginia is working to:

- Define the term “special needs,” which is key to this initiative.
- Use census information as well as information from regional local community groups (including faith-based and VOAD organizations) who have relationships with special needs populations to identify populations requiring additional information and assistance.
- Identify and develop multiple methods and capabilities for communicating with special needs populations should be used (including automated dialing programs, phone trees, and various outdoor and indoor warning systems)
- Ensure broadcast, verbal, and written materials meet Americans with Disabilities Act and other Federal requirements
- Ensure that technology being used to communicate with the special needs population is exercised regularly and can reach deaf, hard of hearing and blind populations through alternative means.
- Develop pre-scripted messages with appropriate content and format for reaching special needs populations (including specific information about special needs transportation, evacuation, and sheltering locations).
- Determine which State and local governments have translated emergency public information materials into different languages

Geographic Scope:

This issue affects both rural and urban areas throughout the Commonwealth, and the initiative is statewide.

Program Management:

This statewide initiative requires a steering committee with representatives from different regions and levels of government as well as the special needs community, advocacy groups, and relevant non-profit organizations.

***Identify new technologies and expand existing technology to improve public warning capabilities.***

Description:

The Commonwealth is developing a Website and emergency notification system, specifically designed for the private sector, containing information related to preparedness and necessary action in the case of an emergency. There are several existing technologies that provide

emergency alert warnings in the Commonwealth including the Emergency Alert System, EMNet, text alerting, and NOAA Weather Radios. The use of the technologies such as these should be expanded along with the addition of new capabilities to enhance the alert warning system. Because citizens receive information from a variety of sources, a “system of systems” approach is needed.

Geographic Scope:

This issue affects all regions in the State, especially localities that do not have the funds to purchase new equipment. Some components of this initiative could be implemented on a regional basis.

Program Management:

This initiative should be managed by a steering committee of local and state level Representatives (Ready Virginia is already a part of this effort).

## **E. Resources**

### **Resources Expended in FY 2007**

**Interoperability Capability Assessment Baseline:** This multi-state effort will identify opportunities for partnering among the Mid-Atlantic States, with the overall goal of avoiding duplicative costs, creating cooperative operations and improving interoperability across the region during disasters.  
**\$250,000**

**Statewide Interoperability Communications** – This funding will allow Virginia to build upon its highly successful investment in radio caches and related equipment by creating smaller caches in central and southwestern Virginia. This investment will also complete a survey to determine the expansion of WebEOC and the next steps in its use.  
**\$2,000,000**

The Virginia General Assembly allocated \$400,000.00 to EMNet in particular

### **Future Resources Required**

To complete operability in the four regions identified in an initiative, it is estimated that equipment, exercises and training may cost approximately \$40,000,000

To complete the interoperability solutions in Virginia’s three UASIs, it is estimated that the equipment, exercises and training may cost approximately \$60,000,000

To complete a robust citizen alert system in all localities and universities it is estimated an additional \$40,000,000 is needed.

To complete an integrated communication system between colleges/universities, surrounding localities and state agencies an additional \$50,000,000 is needed for equipment, training and exercises.

Public education and outreach goals between 2007 and 2010 are estimated at \$2,000,000.

A total of \$192,000,000 is needed for this National Priority.